

Liberal Education in Nova Scotia.

AN ADDRESS

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OF

KING'S COLLEGE, NOVA SCOTIA,

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BY

THE PRESIDENT OF KING'S COLLEGE.

WITH A COMMEMORATION BALLAD.

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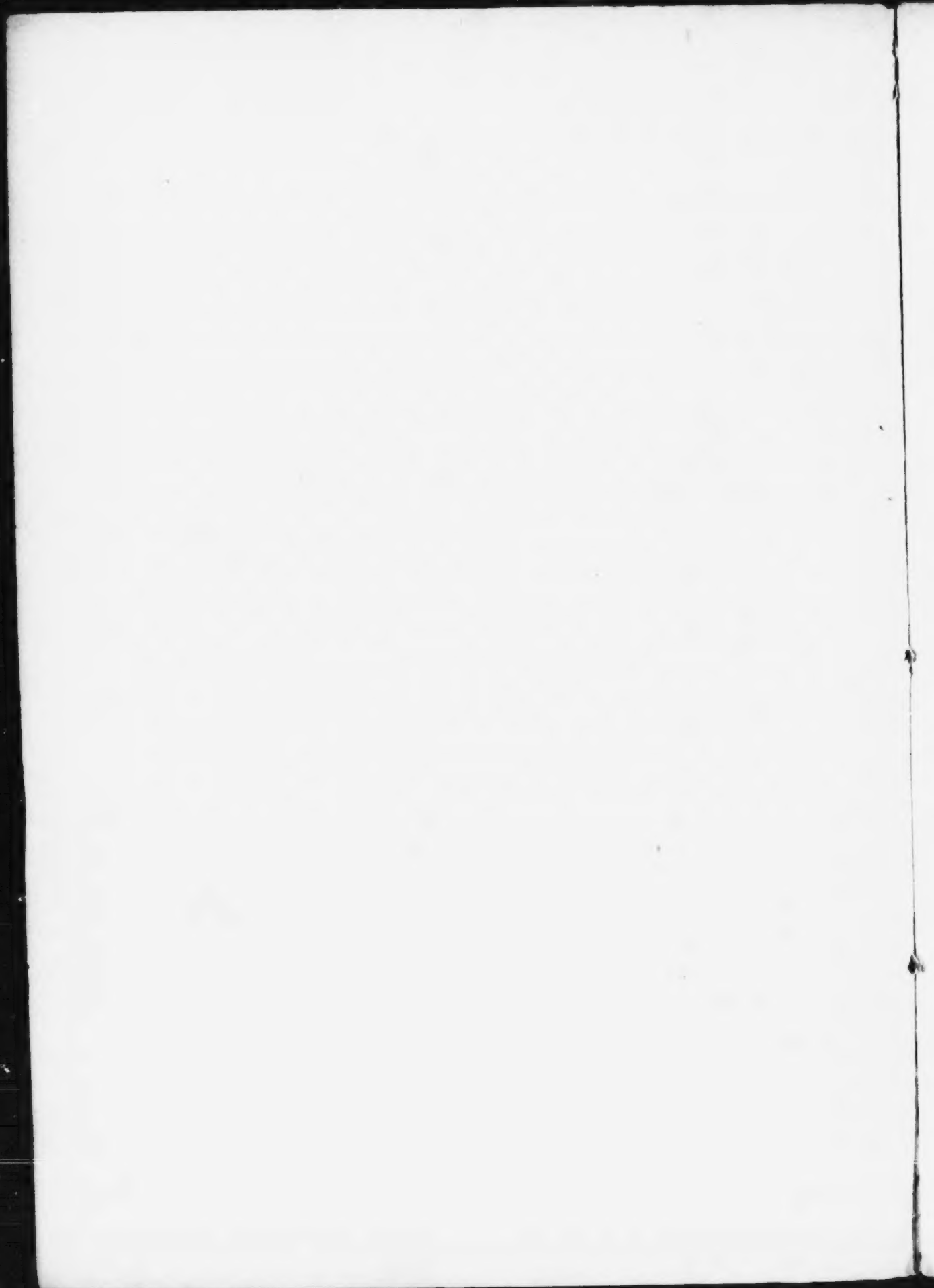
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ADDRESS.

IN accordance with our statutes, I have to address you to-day on some topic connected with the work of education. The subject I have selected is "Liberal Education with especial reference to Nova Scotia," though I am fully aware that there is nothing original to be said about it, and that I run the risk of becoming tedious to those who have followed the recent discussions in the press. But, as a general statement of views on such an important matter may reasonably be expected from one holding the position I have the honour to fill, I avail myself of this opportunity to make it, and the more readily, as it appears to me that some aspects of the question have been overlooked or insufficiently considered.

I understand by the term Liberal Education, the continuance at college of the education received at school with a view rather to the general cultivation of the man than to his training for any particular profession. I suppose the main object of a University such as this, is the promotion of mental culture, that is the cultivation of the whole man as distinct from the developement of technical or professional faculties. In opposition to this view it has been vehemently asserted that Universities and all other places of education exist only for one purpose i. e., to train men for their several professions or business occupations. Only in so far as they do this are they useful to the state. This utilitarian theory of education found a clever, though paradoxical advocate in Mr. Lowe, and is widely supposed to be the correct one; but in spite of all that has been advanced in support of it, we still cling to the old belief that mental culture is an excellent thing in itself apart from professional training, and that one great object of Universities is to advance mental culture, or in other words to give a Liberal Education.

In saying this we do not forget that each man has his special

vocation, his special work to do in the world, that he needs all his strength to do it well. The class of men who can live on accumulated wealth is very limited in Nova Scotia. Most men indeed are bound to devote themselves to some regular profession either for a livelihood, or as a necessary part of their moral discipline. And, for many professions, the most accurate technical training must be sought. All this we readily acknowledge, and yet contend that there is something besides professional training to be attended to if we would rise to the full dignity of our humanity.

The problem to be solved in the direction of any University is, to keep pace with the requirements of Modern Society, without neglecting the general cultivation of the man by the best methods. A student should not be so immersed in his special studies as to be ignorant of or uninterested in the results of research in other directions, much less on the other hand, should a superficial acquaintance with many subjects be accepted as a substitute for that mental discipline which can only be secured by the accurate study of a few. The days seem to have gone by when men were trained so exclusively in Classics and Mathematics as to have no knowledge of or interest in other and more modern studies. The utilitarian theory I have adverted to is, no doubt, a reaction against that state of things. We have now to be especially on our guard against the opposite error of mistaking information for education, of substituting acquaintance with a variety of subjects for vigorous mental discipline.

What are the subjects which should form the staple of collegiate education? To this question varying answers are returned. Of the six great pursuits which are now admitted into University courses, though in different degrees, Classics, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Physical Science, Mental Science, English Literature, each has advocates demanding for it paramount attention. Amongst the advocates for an extended study of the Classics, was the late John Stuart Mill,—no favoured alumnus of a great Public School, and one who was certainly not insensible to the practical value of other branches.

In comparing ancient with modern language as instruments of education, he says:—The only language and the only literature to which I would allow a place in the ordinary curriculum are those of the Greeks and Romans, and to those I would preserve the position

in it which they at present occupy. That position is justified by the great value in education of knowing well some other cultivated language and literature than one's own, and by the peculiar value of those particular languages and literatures. I do not agree with those Reformers who would give a regular or prominent place in the school or University course to modern languages. This is not because I attach small importance to the knowledge of them. No one can in our age be esteemed a well instructed person who is not familiar with at least the French Language so as to read French books with ease, and there is great use in cultivating familiarity with German. But living languages are so much more easily acquired by intercourse with those who use them in daily life, that it is really a waste of time *for those to whom that easier mode is attainable* to labour at them with no other help but that of books and masters." I read this passage over to my learned colleague, the Professor of Modern Languages, who entirely agrees with the view it enunciates. Of course, it must be borne in mind, that the easier mode Mr. Mill speaks of is not open, as a rule, to our students, and that school and college alone afford them opportunities of obtaining any acquaintance with Modern Languages.

If it be asked what especial benefit is derived from the study of a dead language, it may be answered that all forms and varieties of language are so much crystallised thought, and the process of tracing back fine shades of expression to the equally fine shades of thought to which they correspond, affords mental training of the highest order.

Besides this, it may be added that even a rough acquaintance with the languages of the past opens to us the door of the greatest and noblest literature of the world. Through it we may enter at once into the society of some of the best and wisest men the world has seen. Properly used, such a privilege cannot narrow the mind or weaken the sympathies. It is not mere prettiness of composition as some people seem to suppose, that we learn from the grand old writers. The glory of classical literature consists in the simplicity and grandeur of its thoughts, its unity of purpose, its severe subordination of ornament to the moral effect of the whole.

Again, if a man wishes to be independent of the passing theories of his own day, to be tolerant of differences of opinion, to recognize the merits of systems from which he differs, there is no surer road to

the attainment of these objects than the study of Greek Philosophy and Greek History. No one who is sensible of the changes and progress of the world pretends that the Past should be our sole guide for the Future, but, on the other hand, for comprehending our own age, and raising ourselves above its prejudices, there is nothing like studying it by the light of bye gone days. Burke modelled himself upon Cicero, Brougham upon Demosthenes. Without discussing the problem how far young men whose tastes lie in a different direction, should be forced into such a line of study, it is sufficiently obvious that it affords excellent training for the judgment and the intellect. No doubt it ought to be supplemented by modern studies, and it may be pursued in conjunction with them.

Amongst those studies that of Physical Science has strong claims upon our attention. These claims cannot and ought not to be ignored, yet they should not make us lose sight of the relation of the study to others. The wish of some men of science that it should form the staple of a liberal education, if gratified, would probably lead to a dangerous one-sidedness which may be distinctly seen in many cases. Exclusive attention to Mathematics is apt to produce a similar effect. A story is told of a Cambridge mathematician who asked what Paradise Lost *proved*. In such cases the constant study of one kind of evidence creates a reluctance, and perhaps an inability to accept evidence of a different kind, and induces the student openly or tacitly to depreciate or distrust it. He is constantly tempted to consider the finer mental and religious sensibilities as useless, as if they proved nothing. His mental vision seems to be dazzled by the study of the glaring truths of external nature, and to be for the time incapable of discerning the dimmer but nobler truths of the soul and its relations. This does not of course tend to prove that Physical Science should be excluded, but only that it should not form the staple of our education.

The worth of English Literature as an instrument of education was, until recently strangely overlooked, it appears to me, in the ancient universities, and even now it has only obtained its due recognition in London University. It would be absurd to deny the name of educated men to leading writers and statesmen in England and the Colonies, whose minds have been nourished exclusively by the literature in their mother tongue. I refer to such men as Mr. Bright, in England, and the late Hon. Joseph Howe, in Nova Scotia; though,

in their modesty and from their greatness, they often lament their disadvantages in early youth, and their ignorance of ancient literature.

The studies of English Literature and Mental Science may well be pursued together with the Classics. With young or backward pupils it is a better way of teaching English Composition to require occasionally written translations from the Classics read, than to propose subjects for so called original Essays. When the Classics are not read, but Mathematical and Physical Science is necessarily the main study, as is sometimes the case, then the study of English Literature becomes peculiarly valuable as a substitute for the Classics, and as tending to counteract the one-sidedness I have referred to.

A very important element, as I believe, in a Liberal Education is the common life, the social intercourse indoors and out of doors which a young man has with his tutors and fellow students. The common table, the debating society, the cricket club, each has its part to do in polishing language and manners, or stimulating thought, or teaching the necessary lesson how to bear reverses and defeats with equanimity.

And it must not be forgotten that King's College owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Cogswell, founder of the Cogswell Cricket Prize, for keeping up our interest in that manly and social game.

It is well that young men destined for different pursuits should be thus thrown together to make the College so far as possible a microcosm of the world. And it is perhaps especially beneficial to Divinity Students to be thus brought into contact with other minds. Whatever advantages may be derived from the course in a Theological College as supplementary to the Liberal Education supplied by a University, the former is no substitute for the latter. A more extensive acquaintance with Theology would be purchased too dearly at the expense of the power of understanding other classes of men, and sympathizing with their pursuits which can only be derived by personal intercourse with them in youth. The cause of the great influence which the clergy of the Church of England exercise upon their countrymen is to be found in the training the majority of them have received in the free life of the great universities, and on the other hand, we are told by observers not hostile to the Church of Rome, that one reason for the general alienation of the upper and middle classes in France from their Church, is to be found in the

Seminary system by which the priesthood are educated apart from the laity.

I would say, further, that some acquaintance with the Classics and the other subjects of a good school education, is an indispensable preliminary to the due training of Divinity Students. Of course there are exceptions, but I am speaking of what is, or ought to be the rule. Great exceptional gifts may make amends for defects in education, but it is not seemly that the Queen of Sciences should be considered to demand less preparation than any other. If it be said that we are obliged to admit men of inferior powers and attainments, because men of a higher stamp are reluctant to enter a profession in which they can see no prospect of a decent maintenance, then it becomes one of the first duties of the members of the church to roll off that reproach from her. As the priest is, so is the people. As he rises, so do they. As he becomes degraded, so do they also. If *he* lacks learning and independence, the loss is chiefly *theirs* to whom he ministers. Be it understood, however, that I am speaking with regard to the Future rather than to the Past, for hitherto Divinity Students have been amongst the flower of our youth. It is impossible now to do more than allude to this difficulty, but I felt that, in view of one of the great purposes of the college and my own special work, I ought not to leave it altogether unnoticed in this address.

In attempting to adjust the relative claims of the subjects of University education, I am aware that it is not an abstract question, and that it cannot be settled without reference to the character and needs of the country. Those in charge of Higher Education, have, as I said, a double aim before them. Bearing the needs of the country in mind, it becomes obvious that not only is it necessary to maintain the present chairs of Practical Science in King's College, but it is advisable, if possible, to establish a chair of Agricultural Chemistry in addition to them. Nearly 70 acres of land would be immediately available for experimental purposes, and concurrently with the pursuit of Agricultural Chemistry, the problem would be solved how best to keep in order and utilize our college grounds.

In the recent discussions upon higher education the absolute necessity of providing good secondary schools throughout the Province has been almost entirely ignored. The only exception, so far as I know, is to be found in a letter signed Academicus in the *Morning*

Chronicle of March 3rd, 1876. It seems to have been generally assumed by the advocates of change, that a large grant from Government is all that is required to create a mighty University. But if other obstacles had been disregarded, it ought to have struck those eager theorists that one serious obstacle, in this thinly peopled Province, would be the lack of students qualified by previous education to enter on a highly advanced course. To fill lecture halls with pupils of some sort or other, especially when no residence is required, may be no very difficult matter; but if you regard quality as well as quantity the question assumes a different aspect.

It has been argued by the opponents of the present system, that under it there can be no close attention to specialities, as each Professor is required to teach two or more subjects. The obvious answer to this is, that division of labour cannot possibly be carried to such an extent here, as in an old country. General not special Medical Practitioners flourish in Nova Scotia, and each member of the legal profession combines in his own person the functions of Barrister, Conveyancer, and Solicitor. The same law holds good in the teaching profession as in others. Subdivision will come in time, but at present and for many years to come, one Tutor or Professor must devote his attention to more than one branch of study. It does not follow that a man's knowledge of a subject is superficial and worthless because he does not possess that profound and extensive acquaintance with it that results from undivided attention. Although the objection referred to is not one that especially concerns King's College, I may further observe in answer to it that a talented lecturer who advanced it, afforded in his own person an illustration of its fallacy. To lecture a presumably intelligent audience on all the great questions of the day, and upon one occasion, is a proceeding that may be judicious and instructive in Halifax, N. S., but would certainly be grotesque in London. And though a lecturer may speak with great authority on topics of the Far West, he can scarcely be considered at the same time qualified to discuss the Eastern question with all the confidence of a Stratford De Redcliffe or a Gifford Palgrave.

We need not notice these theories further as the sound sense of the community has ruled against them, but we would, however, press upon our rulers that if they wish to raise the intellectual standard in our Colleges, they must commence by improving the Schools which

supply the material on which the Colleges have to work. The Matriculation subjects are held to represent the *minimum* of work required from schools instead of the *maximum*, as is the case in England.

The defect in our system, in my opinion, has been the lack of a competent Board of Examiners outside the College. True, that defect has been in a great measure remedied by requiring from each student residence during each Term, and submission to Terminal Examinations as well as the examinations for Responsions and the Degree. Moreover, "Foreign Examiners" have from time to time been appointed. These regulations, and a constant adherence to the traditions of the University of Oxford where they are applicable, explain the high position graduates of King's College have taken in the mother country as well as in Nova Scotia, in spite of all drawbacks. Still, the reliance upon Foreign Examiners, who, though highly cultivated men, are generally inexperienced in educational work, is not altogether satisfactory, and we therefore welcome the recent legislation simply because it promises to put the necessary work of examination on a more satisfactory footing. Whether it will effect that object remains of course to be seen. Whatever King's College can do towards it, will, I believe be done.

Perhaps the new scheme will be of greatest service to Education if it becomes the means, first, of improving the secondary schools, and then, of fixing and maintaining a higher Standard of Matriculation than at present prevails. This might be done under Section 36 of the Act by issuing after Examination, such "Certificates of Proficiency" as to exempt their holders from the Matriculation Examinations at the various Colleges.

COMMEMORATION BALLAD.

Recited by a Student of King's College, June 29th. 1876.

Again we greet old friends and tried, on our great gathering day,
Again in welcome heartfelt, deep, we sing a simple lay.
From far and near, from rural nooks, from busy haunts of men,
From cares of state, from merchant's desk, from work with voice and pen,
Ye sons and lovers of old King's, cheering each other's hearts
Stand here once more and listen whilst *your* sons perform their parts.

And not alone around us are the sons of Windsor found
They dwell in England, India, the whole wide world around.
Were some, now distant, in these halls, how gladly we would raise,
Our voice to do them honour in remembrance of old days.
Mindful of them, are we, and they, where e'r their lot be cast,
Oft visit us in reverie, in memories of the past.

Need, duty, pleasure, each may call mankind abroad to roam,
But where there's Virtue in the breast, there dwells the love of Home.
The Switzer and the Tyrolese languish, on foreign strands,
For the mountains, lakes, ravines of their glorious native lands.
And Scotia's sons in distant climes with no less fervent zest
Yearn for the woodlands, lakes, and plains of the Britain of the West.

- 1 When noble Inglis sheathed his sword after the fight was won,
When worn with famine, toil and care, his sands were almost run.
Not in the ancient home of Gods, in the sun-lit Isles of Greece
Though girt by loving grateful hearts could his ardent soul find peace,
He thirsted for the forest glades, across the trackless sea,
The scenes of earth and manhood's prime, of happy days and free ;

Where bears and cunning moose yet roam under the forest trees
And incense from the spruce and pine is wafted on the breeze,
Where placid lakes reflect clear heavens, and winding streamlets flow,
Where Spring reveals the Mayflower sweet, blooming amidst the snow,
Where Summer's glory leaps to life, as by magician's wand,
And Ocean's Self with loving force, pours wealth upon the land.

Not ours the sights of magnates proud and serfs in hopeless toil,
Here stand erect in conscious worth the tillers of the soil.
With ample means for wholesome lives all people here are blest,
Through greed and wanton luxury no Poor are here depressed,
Here is fulfilled the Poet's dream of Ireland's happier day
When wealth did *not* accumulate, and men did *not* decay.

What wonder that the simple folk, exiled to other climes,
 Could ne'er forget, in fairest scenes, their Home in early times.
 Regret and pity flood our hearts, as we remember those
 Who vainly each the other sought, till death destroyed their woes,
 That anguish borne by loving souls, stains not our father's fame,
 On rash intriguers, bent on change, calm Justice lays the blame,
 In self defence the swift decree, if History speaks aright
 2 By war's dread laws, not despot's whim, or persecuting might.

Where danger lowers, where duty calls, are sons of Scotia found,
 Where e'er the flag of Britain waves, it waves o'er Scotia's ground!
 Her sons have held that flag aloft in Britain's direst need,
 In desperate fight 'gainst fearful odds they've proved their British breed.
 And whilst true men, to heroes true, their hearts in reverence bow,
 Williams of Kars will revered be, and Inglis of Lucknow.

Graven in honour's roll, those names will shine forever bright,
 Ranked with the noblest who have fought defending Britain's right.
 And other sons, can Scotia boast, if less renowned than those
 Not less heroic, undismayed confronting sternest foes.
 3 Of gallant Welsford, good as brave, these walls for aye shall tell,
 How through the deadly breach he rushed, how valiantly he fell!

But not alone on battle field, or in beleagured town
 Can dauntless valour be displayed, and virtue win the crown!
 The judge upright, the statesman pure, the priest of spotless life,
 These in their ranks are faithful found, waging a noble strife.
 No matter where their minds were formed, where bred in early days.
 Let them forever honoured be, their country's strength and praise.

Such were the men our fathers knew, to us by record known,
 Foremost in arts, foremost in arms, faithful to Church and Throne,
 Still may our native land give birth to loyal sons like these,
 Still may she with Britannia share the empire of the seas,
 Blest by the treasures in her soil, by health creating clime,
 And far more blest by manhood true until the close of time.

1 "Many a time he expressed an intense longing to be once more amongst the scenes of his youth."—"*Sketches of Nova Scotians*, by Rev. G. W. Hill."

2 See Campbell's *History of Nova Scotia*.

3 "An intimate associate of the saintly Vicars."—Rev. G. W. Hill.

